You Should've Known Better - Hannigram

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You Should’ve Known Better - Hannigram

by Mooneyarchives

Summary

(AU) Will has always had an affinity for exploration - everyone told him it would lead to his doom. He never cared for these remarks until he found himself lost in the forest amidst a snow storm. As a last beacon of hope, he finds a castle upon a hill. The menacing building seems to be abandoned, however he is faced by a mysterious figure.

Notes

This AU was inspired by a piece of fan art by lovesnametag on Instagram!

The Castle

Will waged through the bitter cold, struggling to see anything ahead of himself. The air burned his cheeks and his eyelashes became frozen over from the snowflakes that melted with what little body heat he had left. The road was buried under a thick blanket of snow, his steps were heavy and desperate. “A little f-f-further” he whispered to himself, in an attempt to convince his feet to carry him to his no longer existent destination. Will knew he was lost, but he couldn’t let himself understand that - it would mean certain death. People had always insisted that his obsession with what the world has to hide would be his doom, perhaps he was starting to believe that. The trees loomed overhead - hiding any stars that might’ve managed to stay visible through the snow fall. Will clung to his cloak with outworldly desperation, tightly wrapping it around his body - he would suppose his boots were filled with snow, but he could no longer feel his legs. His cheeks would glow red if the dome of the night allowed for enough light. Despite every bone and muscle in his body screaming at him to just lay down and go to sleep - Will pressed on, the forest as his only companion.
Eventually his blind faith carried him to a frozen river, he tried his best to see anything ahead - almost giving up, when suddenly he saw a flicker of light off in the distance. Was his mind playing tricks on him? It seemed to have grown fond of that recently. Carefully, with his whole body trembling, Will lowered himself onto the ice, taking small - quivering - steps. Using what little energy he had left, the man pulled himself up from the ice and onto the ground by the roots that hung from the sloped dirt. “Just a little m-more…” he stuttered, looking ahead to where he had seen the flicker. What vague light the blurred moon supplied outlined the silhouette of a castle, sat upon a hill - without realising it, Will’s lips curled into a weak smile “okay” , he sighed under his breath, bringing himself up to his feet. By the way he moved, one would assume he’d been an ice statue brought to life - at this point even he wasn’t sure if that wasn’t the case. After each step he repeated ‘just one more’, in his head - begging his body to get him to the gates.
The metal bars upon the entryway curled into vine patterns - bringing an unnerving contrast to the actual vines growing over the gate. Will reached a shaky hand for the fence and pushed. Frozen foliage crumbled off the metal, and the gate creaked as it swung open. Nervously, Will stepped onto the castle grounds, looking up at the menacing building sitting ahead. Every gut feeling one could have told him to turn around, but he didn’t exactly have the option, so to push past his better judgement - Will picked up his pace.
The doors of the castle appeared black in the moonlight. Gargoyle heads - holding big metal rings, hung on each door. Will reached his hand up hitting the iron against the wood, once. No answer. Once again. The door shifted open, causing Will to stumble ahead. He stepped in, closing the opening behind him. Immediately he fell to the ground - the air in the castle was cold, but not freezing. It was all he could’ve asked for. The foyer was dark and seemingly empty - although Will wouldn’t be able to see his own hand if he held it in front of his face. Why was it so dark? He could’ve sworn that he saw a light. “Hello?”, he called out - “I’m sorry to intrude, I was going to freeze out...out there”. There was no response. Will felt around the floor - carpet? He heard the wind fight to get into the castle, and it seemed like some had made it through. Suddenly torches lining the staircases ahead began lighting, one by one - leading up to the balcony above. A tall figure stood in the dim, red glow of the fire. Will couldn’t make out the man’s face, or real silhouette - he was enveloped in a long cloak,

black fabric pooling around his feet. “I- I’m sorry...h-hello? My name is Will - Graham, Will Graham. Um- I was, I was lost”. The figure did not respond, but Will could feel a piercing stare tracking his every breath. He did not dare to speak again. The figure remained still for a few moments - then, with one sharp movement, the cloak was flying down the stairs towards Will. Before he could flinch, the figure stood before him - backlit by the torches. He still couldn’t make out the features of the man - but something about the mystery of it all entertained him. Still without saying a word, the figure reached out his hand to help Will to his feet. The hand was cold - almost freezing, Will had to keep himself from stumbling backwards at the sensation. The air was slightly warmer now, with all the fire - and some of the haze had eased in his mind. The figure held onto his hand, slowly taking steps back - leading Will further into the foyer. Now the man’s face was visible through the efforts of the flames - he had strangely sharp features, and the contrast between his pale skin and red lips was striking. “I- I’m sorry...but who are you?” - whispered Will, taking a step closer to the figure. Silence, but then - a chilling, but smooth voice, an accent that Will couldn’t quite pinpoint, “Hannibal Lecter”. Will waited for more - but the man was silent. “I’m terribly sorry to intrude...I - I just, I w-was lost and..I w-would h-have frozen out-out there”.
“Yes, you mentioned that”.
Will wasn’t sure what else he was supposed to say, but the frozen over adrenaline he was running on had almost burned out. Hannibal still held onto his hand - now supporting him enough to stand, with a firm and steady grip. “I thin-think I-I’m going to p-pass out…” muttered Will, before collapsing into the figure. “Yes, I suppose so” - said Hannibal, to himself.

The Sun

Chapter Summary

> Will wakes up in a strange room, confused as ever. Although perhaps this is the safest he's felt in a long time.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

> Light came pooling into the room, making its way around the pulled back curtain. Will lay in bed - his head resting on a large pillow and a blanket covering most of his body. His breath was steady, yet shallow, and his eyes twitched as the light found a resting place on his face. A few moments passed by as the warmth soaked into his skin. A quiet breath out, followed by a sharp gasp - his eyes shot open. The bright sunlight stung and he squeezed them shut in an effort to orient himself. There was a pause - he sat in bed, holding his eyes closed, before he realized the amount of ache running through his body - and collapsed back onto the pillow with a wheeze. 'Where am I?' - he thought to himself. The man didn't remember much, images of snow blinked in his mind, and he felt the burn of the freezing air on his face. Every muscle in his body felt like it was made of stone, and he could hardly move his neck to see the room. The light was still painful but Will forced himself to look. Wooden poles went up from the foot of the bed - holding up an embroidered fabric of some sort. The curtains above the bed, that would normally be let down at night, were fastened in place. A large wardrobe stood at the far end of the room, there was a fireplace to the left, and a door to the right. Will wondered what was going on, and how he had gotten here. He drew one of his arms from under the blanket - his skin appeared cracked, and he was wearing a linen shirt he had never remembered owning. His confusion only grew - nothing about this was familiar. Not knowing what else he could do - Will waited. Soon enough quiet, determined steps sounded in the hallway, outside of the door. The handle slowly angled towards the floor, and a tall man stepped through the entryway. "Awake, I see"
> "Y-Yes...where am I? Wh-what's going on?"
> "This would be Lecter Castle, you stumbled here in a snow storm"
> "Oh.."- Will paused, now slightly relaxing, "Um, I-I'm sorry about the trouble. I don't remember much. How long have I been here?"
> "Three days"
> "W-what?... Have I been asleep that long?"
> "You suffered severe injuries in the cold - only fair that your body would need time to recover, don't you think?"
> "Uh...yes? I-I'm sorry, who are you?"
> The man paused as he walked over to the bed - "Hannibal Lecter, so we meet again Mr. Graham"
> Will's expression softened, it was almost comforting to know they were not complete strangers - "You've been very kind to me, Mr. Lecter. Truly, I think you saved my life. Thank

you".
"Yes, I suppose I did. But no need for thanks - I've enjoyed the company"
Will laughed - but the ache in his throat quickly turned that into coughing, he tried his best to calm himself before speaking "I have been unconscious for three days, not much for company".
"Not to worry. A guest is a guest" - smiled Hannibal, "I shall go fetch some tea and food for you - you must be starving".
"Oh- no… that's really quite alright…" - but his excuses were cut short by the loud growling in his stomach.
"Yes, well… tea then" - and with that Hannibal was out the door.
Will's gaze shifted back to the embroidered fabric hanging over him - he was dizzy, but his confusion had begun fading, which he was beyond thankful for.

Maybe half an hour had gone by when Hannibal came back into the room - holding a tray. Will had drifted off to sleep yet again but the movement woke him up, "sorry...uhm, I must've dozed off".
"That's quite alright. I brought some chamomile tea - it should assist your throat".
"Oh...yes, thank you, Mr. Lecter. I didn't know a person could be in this much pain at once" - he let out a small nervous laugh, followed by more coughing.
"We'll get you on your feet in no time - and please, Hannibal".
Will shifted up - leaning against the headboard to sit so that Hannibal could set the tray in his lap, "Thank you...Hannibal".
The man smiled, sitting down at the foot of the bed. "Do forgive me asking, but how does a gentleman such as yourself end up lost in a snowstorm?".
Will had hardly heard the question as he gulped down the tea cup, his thirst only growing.
"Ummm.. I was looking for —- something? Quite honestly I don't remember".
Hannibal went for the tea pot, pouring Will another cup, while the man practically inhaled spoon after spoon of soup - attacking the bread in between. "You are much hungrier than I anticipated - allow me a moment" - a few swift steps and Hannibal was gone again. Will wanted to say something but all he could think about was getting the next spoon of soup in his mouth as soon as possible. When Hannibal returned with another tray - the first one had been entirely cleared of anything edible. "Alright, Mr. Graham - this should suffice", he said. Swapping the tray in Will's lap. A whole loaf of bread, more soup, a large piece of meat - and a pitcher of cold water. It took much effort on Will's part to not lunge at the food immediately, "Will" - he managed to spit out before taking a massive bite out of the loaf. Hannibal seemed content with his offerings - "Yes then, Will. I shall be back to check on you in half an hour, but for now - enjoy". He smiled before turning on his heels and carrying the empty tray out of the room, gently shutting the door behind himself.

The castle was cold and dark, occasional candle light was the only thing illuminating the hallways. Will's room had been the only one in which sunlight was allowed. Hannibal's steps echoed through the emptiness as his shoe soles clicked against the marble floors. He made his way to the kitchen - a fire was still burning in the stove, a pot sitting atop it. After setting the dishes by the wash bowl, he carefully picked four small vials from the cupboard - each made of green glass and tightly corked. He put them in the pocket situated on the right side of his shirt, and walked off - making quick strides to the foyer and up the staircase.

Half an hour had been beyond enough for Will to devour the food - in fact it couldn't have taken him more than ten minutes. Now he was chugging the water straight from the pitcher - barely stopping long enough to breathe. He never knew how good water could be. Although a part of him wished it was all rum, to make the pain go away. After the second tray had been completely cleared Will allowed himself to take a moment to process what was going on. He set everything onto the nightstand, cringing at the pain shooting through his arms. At the very least, he felt he was safe here - but he wondered how bad his injuries were since he hadn't seen any part of himself besides his arms. Once again looking around the room, Will now tried to piece together where Lecter Castle might even be. There was no way he could've wandered that far off from his home in a storm - but he could not recall ever knowing of this castle's existence. Will's speculations were cut short when Hannibal walked into the room - "How are you feeling?".

"Better", Will smiled - "I apologize for the mess, I've never been that hungry before".

"Apologies, apologies. I beg you, Will - everything is taken care of. I only ask that you focus on getting well. Speaking of which!" - he reached for his pocket, pulling out the vials - "I've brought you some medicine. I must warn you though, it can make one quite tired - which I'm sure you already are. Regardless, it will be good for your cough and should ease some pain as well".

"That would be wonderful, thank you, Hannibal" - he said, grabbing the vials.

"Take two of these for now - the others are for later. Then allow yourself to drift off - I'll come check on you in the evening".

The medicine tasted vaguely of licorice root, a flavor Will wasn't entirely fond of. Regardless, he swallowed every last drop. Within minutes his eyelids became heavy, the sun gently played along his lashes, weaving him into a tight cocoon of heavenly warmth. If he hadn't known any better, he would've believed he was one with the sunlight. Although even if his mind was simply playing another trick on him, he didn't mind. Soon enough Will's mind fell into blackness - his breath was steady, he was very much alive - but for now he did not exist in any way that mattered.

The sunlight that had lulled him to sleep shifted into a flaming sunset - casting orange glow on the furniture and walls. Soon after the sunset came the moonlight. It was brighter this time, no snow distorting it's appearance, no clouds to mask the glow - just the moon as it was. Will had always enjoyed looking at the moon, it felt more familiar than most things, he didn't know much of where he belonged - as he could fit in anywhere if he wanted. Many nights he would lie in his own bed, debating over his understanding of the world. It was obscure and he didn't like thinking about it - but that doesn't mean he didn't spend almost every second of every day doing so. Will was notorious in his village for never doing what was good for him - he had a hunger to run, although he had yet to figure out what he was running from. Or maybe what he was running towards.

Hannibal crept into the room, his shadow growing on the wall - his silhouette darker than ever in the moonlight. He sat at the foot of the bed in silence. Will was in deep slumber and it seemed as though nothing could disturb him. Hannibal watched as his eyes darted back and forth behind his eyelids, lashes twitching now and again. The rise and fall of his chest was calm, it seemed regular, although perhaps slower than it should have been. The medication had seemed to do its job. The question of why Hannibal had come into the room, knowing Will would not be awake, was left unanswered even in his mind. As far as anyone else was concerned they didn't exist at all, the moonlight their only witness.

Chapter End Notes

Ah!! Sorry for the short chapters, I’m working on so many things at once - but I promise the next chapter is def going to be a big one, probably coming this weekend! Thanks for reading <3

The Moon

Chapter Summary

Hannibal takes Will out into the rose garden to get him on his feet and Will begins to speculate over what he was looking for when he wondered out into the snow storm.

Chapter Notes

Sorry that this took so long to get out! I've been crazy busy but I had some time today and wanted to write so here we go!!

Will had slept through the entire day and part of the evening because of the medicine that Hannibal had given him. Apart from managing the pain and the cough, it was intended to make him forget why he had come here, for reasons that Hannibal wouldn't even admit to himself, let alone announce. For now he told himself that it would help Will forget the trauma of being stranded out in the storm.
It was about 8:30PM now, and Hannibal came into the room as quietly as possible, a tray of food balancing on one arm. He set the dished on the nightstand and turned to wake Will. In all this time he'd enjoyed cooking for another above all, it was rather therapeutic to have someone to care for. Hannibal wished to keep him here forever.
"Will?" — he asked gently, sitting down at the edge of the bed and placing a soft hand on Will's shoulder. The man stirred, eventually fluttering his eyes open and looking around to make sure his surroundings were still the same. They were. He relaxed, looking over at Hannibal.
"What time is it?" — Will asked in a hoarse voice.
"Soon to be nine" — Hannibal replied, removing his hand and leaving it in his lap. "I brought your dinner, you've slept through the whole day" — he explained.
"The whole day? You could have woken me" — Will chuckled, sitting up and noticing that he was in much less pain than before.
"What would be the point in that?" — Hannibal offered with a smile, taking the tray from the nightstand and setting it on Will's lap.
"Company? If memory serves you said that was what you looked for in me"
"Company is of little use when it is unwell"
"I suppose that's fair enough" — Will replied, cutting into the steak on his plate.
"Have your dinner, after I believe it would do you some good to get some fresh air" — with that Hannibal was up and away.

Half an hour later, Hannibal came into the room bearing a fresh set of clothes for Will, among which was a pair or soft pants and a new linen shirt. It had just now occurred to Will that Hannibal had dressed him in what he was currently wearing, he blushed at the thought. Hannibal came over to the bed and set the clothing down, he then reached into the chest pocket of his jacket and pulled out a red vial, which he handed to Will — "Something to help you with the pain" — he explained. Will was only happy to hear this. He drank down the bottle immediately even though it stung. "Thank you" — he sighed with relief.
"I am going to leave this clothing here, get changed and meet me downstairs in the foyer" — Hannibal directed, turning and leaving the room once Will gave him a nod of understanding. Getting changed into clean clothing was much more difficult than Will had anticipated. His skin felt raw, cracks in his skin were still drying up. Carefully, he slipped off his shirt and reached for the clean one. As he had discovered, he wasn't wearing any pants under his blanket, so pulling on the ones Hannibal had left proved a challenging task. He figured everything out in about 10 minutes of struggling, and now he was on his way out of the room. The door handle was cool beneath his palm, and as the door opened a cold wave washed over him. He shivered as he walked down the hallway, very subtly guided by the few candles that shone dim light on the walls. The stairs appeared much more intimidating when he had first arrived, now they reminded him of the steps to the town hall in his home village. He descended slowly, keeping a tight grip on the railing as he went. Hannibal awaited at the bottom, he watched as Will came down, eyes tracking every movement.
"I trust you'll need this" — Hannibal greeted, holding a long coat open for Will to put on. Will gave a nod and dipped one arm after the other in the coat, shrugging it up once Hannibal let go, the temperature in the castle was much more bearable now, he wondered how come Hannibal hadn't utilized any of the fire places except the one in Will's room. "Are we going outside?" — he asked.
Hannibal bent his arm and held it out for Will to hook onto, which the man did instinctively.
"I thought to take you into the garden" — he explained.
"You care for as garden?" — what didn't Hannibal do around here, there were no servants in sight.
"Yes, it's a…peaceful activity"
"What kind of garden is it?"
"You will see"

They stood in the garden, the overwhelming scent of the new blossoms making Will slightly dizzy. The garden always seemed to have a life of its own, as if the twisting thorny vines could wrap themselves around their racing hearts and put an end to their anxiety. They wished they would, but for now Hannibal's mind was filled with questions that he couldn't ask Will. And in turn, Will's was filled with the questions he couldn't ask Hannibal.
"Roses" — he breathed, looking out onto the wide sea of red that spread before him. Will loved roses, always considering them to be an elegant yet destructive flower.
"Yes" — Hannibal confirmed with a warm smile as he watched Will's eyes darting around the flower beds.
They came closer to a bush that was illuminated by the soft glow of the moon. The snow had melted away, and now all that was left of the brutal storm from a week ago were Will's frost bite scars. Hannibal reached a hand out for a flower, trailing his fingers down the stem and snapping it off with a sharp motion. "Here" — he said quietly, handing the flower to Will.
The man smiled, studying the way the petals overlapped — "It's beautiful" — he replied.
"This garden is now as much yours as it is mine, you may come explore whenever you wish"

— Hannibal offered, studying the way Will's cheeks creased when he smiled. Will only gave a nod of acknowledgment.

They sat on the bench by the pond, watching the way the moon reflected on the surface of the water. Without noticing it, Will had moved dangerously close to Hannibal for warmth. He twirled his rose between his fingers, hoping to avoid the single thorn with every movement. Being outside made him wonder more than before how he'd gotten here. What was he searching for? The memories flashed past him. The snow. The cold. The biting air. The fear. Everything around him seemed to spin. He let out a heavy exhale and leaned on Hannibal for support — "I need to go back" — he breathed out, right before passing out.

The Star

Chapter Summary

> Will wakes after losing consciousness in Hannibal's rose garden. He finds that Hannibal had gone above and beyond to care for him. They strike up conversation about Will's ambitions and Will begins gathering clues regarding what led him to the castle.

The mornings at the Lecter castle have solemnly been bright or welcoming. With all the curtains drawn and the cold of the night becoming a constant presence, it was an atmosphere that only the creatures of the shadows could enjoy. Now the sun flooded through the hallways, pooling around each marble column that supported the high ceilings of the foyer. The light warmed the air, not uncomfortably so, simply blissful. Will's curtains were regularly tied back to let the light in, however the rest of the castle hadn't experienced the touch of the sun's gentle rays in years. It seemed as if the castle itself had begun dancing, the elegant stained glass casting many tiny rainbow specks all over the floor and the walls.
Will awoke cocooned in the comforting sunlight, he could get used to this.
"Good morning" — Hannibal greeted, putting the book he had been reading down in his lap.
"Were you…watching me sleep?" — Will asked, sitting up only to be faced with a piercing headache. If this persisted he wouldn't object to staying in bed all day.
"Not quite, no. I was monitoring your condition throughout the night" — Hannibal explained, standing up and walking over to the bed.
"Have you slept?" — a seemingly invisible tinge of worry struck Will's vocal cords, forcing him to sit up taller.
"No, though I assure you it's completely alright. I don't sleep often".
"Don't you get tired?" — Will asked, the worry turning to confusion.
"I suppose I do at times, though not frequently".
"So you…don't need to sleep? What are you, a vampire or something?" — he laughed.
"Or something" — Hannibal replied with a smile.
"Don't leave me hanging like that"
"I suppose I don't exactly have a choice"
"You always have a choice, it's just a matter of what you pick"
"And so it is"
Will only smiled in response — "It seems that the scent of the roses has found its way inside" — he commented.
"Yes, well not exactly found" — Hannibal replied, coming over to the other side of the bed and drawing back the curtain that had been concealing the right side of the room.
Immediately, Will was greeted with an overwhelming flood of rose perfume. Vases upon vases of roses lined the walls and piled on the nightstand and dresser.
"What did you do? This must be the entire garden" — Will managed to toss out before scrambling out of bed to study the flowers closer.
"Half" — Hannibal replied plainly, watching as Will plucked a blood red flower from a green

glass vase.
“This is incredible….and insane” — Will said, turning to face Hannibal, flower held in both hands in front of his chest — “Thank you”.
“You’re very welcome” — Hannibal smiled — “They seemed like your favorite”.
“They are, how did you know?”
“You were particularly affectionate with them”
“Was it that obvious?”
“Perhaps”
“We should put these around the castle, it would be a shame to let them wilt in one room”
“After breakfast” — Hannibal replied, coming closer and taking the flower from Will.
“You didn’t bring a tray?” — Will asked, unfamiliar with this form of dining routine, seeing as his meals had always been delivered to him by Hannibal.
“I thought to ask you to join me today” — Hannibal explained.
Will accepted with a warm smile and a nod — “I’d like that”.

The dining room stood set when they came down. Hannibal unnecessarily supporting Will as they walked; he paid special attention to the stairs, carefully leading Will down. Their places were set opposite of each other, by the sunny part of the dining hall. The stained glass cast rainbow drops all over the dishes and spilled over onto the chairs and floors.
“How come have the curtains never been up before? This is gorgeous” — Will asked as Hannibal helped him into his chair and tucked it back against the table.
“I’m not particularly fond of sunlight” — Hannibal replied, settling into his own seat and starting to move the dishes around in order to get everything plated.
“How come are they up now?”
“I was eager to impress” — Hannibal offered with a chuckle, pouring Will a glass of cold pink wine.
“Why me?”
“There is something quite interesting about you. I wish to learn more” — he stated honestly, pouring his own glass and moving on to place the pastries onto Will’s plate, liberally piling it with baked goods despite Will’s overwhelmed appearance. “There are eggs and sausage in the silver dishes, I’ll allow you to utilize that at your own discretion” — he added, pushing an empty plate towards Will.
“What’s so interesting?” — Will asked, taking a sip of his wine.
“There is a morbid curiosity about you. Who else ventures into the forest during such a storm? Who else stays in an isolated castle with a complete stranger? You seek to know how events will turn out, and I seek that myself. I hope to know more of what draws you to the places you venture. Be that physically or mentally” — Hannibal concluded, starting to gather food onto his own plate.
“So you have a morbid curiosity…for my morbid curiosity? That is quite the mix, don’t you think?”
“Perhaps it’s a little overbearing, but I can hardly help myself”
“I too am curious about what drew me here” — Will admitted, taking a bite of a strawberry filled pastry.
“You have no memories of the storm then? I assume that would be for the best, seeing as those events would be quite traumatic to relive in your memory”.
“That was what I assumed at first, but now it just feels like a piece of me is gone. I want to know why I’m here. And it wouldn’t hurt to see this place on a map, I never remember a castle being anywhere near my village and there is absolutely no way I managed to wonder

too far in those weather conditions”
“All in due time. I’ll make sure of your safe return to home” — Hannibal lied, he hadn’t planned on letting go of Will any time soon, in fact he was no longer sure that he would let Will go at all. Although perhaps it hadn’t been a lie at all, if Will could bring himself to call this his new home, it wouldn’t have to be.
Will only offered a nod in response before returning to his meal.

They ate in relative silence, Will barely having enough control to actually chew his food before swallowing. He would miss the food when he went back to his village — he thought to himself. Hannibal’s cooking was remarkable indeed, besides that he seemed to have a limitless access to ingredients, especially meat, which Will assumed the man either grew on the grounds or hunted in the forest. Everything about the positioning of the castle seemed perfect. Will wondered how come he’d never heard of it before he landed himself here in the storm. Though the question that drilled him above all was what had he been looking for when he ventured into the woods. When breakfast was done, Hannibal offered Will a bent arm to hook onto and walked him up the stairs, though instead of taking the turn towards Will’s bedroom, he instead swerved right and proceeded down a bright and warm hallway which was illuminated by an overwhelming amount of sunlight pooling in through the stained glass.
“Where are we going?” — Will asked, looking around in awe of the colors that played on the walls and floors.
“I have something to show you” — Hannibal replied with a smile.
They took one more right before landing in front of two giant doors, carved with beautiful floral patterns. Hannibal let go of Will and came forward, leaning his back against the door and taking a hold of the door handles — “A gift” — he smiled, pushing on the handles and stepping backwards as the doors swung open.
Will’’s lips parted at the sight, books lined every wall, from floor to ceiling, covering the circular room in multicolored spines. — “This is….this is incredible” — he breathed out, barely above a whisper. With light feet, Will stepped into the room, looking around at the shelves and mapping equipment that was laid out on the table. “You mean this is all mine?” — he asked, excited shock settling over him.
“It’s here for you, all day and all night, everyday. Yes.” — Hannibal replied with a warm smile.
“I don’t know what to say”
“Don’t say anything then, go on and explore. I thought this space would be suitable for you. Something to quench your morbid curiosity…if not amplify it”
“I have never seen anything like this”
“The castle libraries are vast, this one is all yours”
“Thank you, Hannibal” — Will smiled sincerely.
“My pleasure”.
Will spent the day buried up to his neck in books, periodically running up and down the stairs that led to the second level of the shelves to gather more material before returning to searching the maps of the word and reading travelers accounts of regions beyond the sea. It was beyond fascinating to him, this exploration was everything. He didn’t want to leave this room, not now, not ever. This is what he’d been looking for his whole life. Of course it wasn’t the wonders of the world, but it was the closest he would ever get to them, and for him that was good enough. During mid afternoon Hannibal brought up a tray with enough food for the both of them. They sat together in the sun, eating as Will excitedly read excerpts from travel journals to Hannibal in between bites. At evening time Hannibal came in again to

gently coax Will into coming outside with him. After a considerable amount of convincing, Will finally gave in. They strolled along the castle grounds and Will was actually grateful for the fresh air after hiding in old books all day.
“Did you enjoy your present?” — Hannibal asked, already knowing the answer.
“The best I’ve ever received” — he replied, walking alongside Hannibal, their arms locked together.
“I’m glad to hear that”
“Would you tell me where we are? I couldn’t find anything on the maps”
Hannibal thought about this for a second — “The castle remains off the maps, not as uncharted territory but due to local legend that these grounds are inhabited by an ancient demon”
“And are they?”
“It has only been me here for as long as I can remember”
“Curious, very curious”
“I suppose if there is anyone to figure this mystery out, it would be you” — Hannibal replied fondly, walking slightly closer now.
“I shall try my best” — Will laughed, walking closer as well.

That night, as Will lied awake in his bed and looked out through the window at the blanket of stars that glistened in the sky, he began to remember his journey. The stars in the sky that had guided him that night, step after step, warming him with an equally as cold of a glow. The stars didn’t mock him now as they did before, they instead invited him to sleep. However the question of what had led him here forced his eyes open again and again. He knew it was something he’d tried to find before, thought it didn’t seem to be something he was even remotely close to. Hannibal’s words rang through his mind “local legend”, “ancient demon”. All of this had to add up to something. Had he come here in search of proving the legend?

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